

# **Training Opportunities For Conservators**

**National Park Service  
Harpers Ferry Center  
Division of Conservation  
Harpers Ferry, West Virginia**

## **Division of Conservation**

The National Park Service manages important cultural, natural and recreational resources. The Division of Conservation at Harpers Ferry Center in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, functions as a central conservation resource for the Park Service and offers training opportunities in artifact conservation. Staff provide a wide range of technical services and expertise necessary for long-term preservation of NPS collections. These diverse collections range from fine art to ethnographic materials to mineral and archeological collections and archives.

The Division's treatment of artifacts for exhibition in the parks includes technical examination and scientific analyses. Collections reside at park sites and the conservators advise park and administrative staffs on issues of collections care and exhibition requirements and also perform systematic collection assessments.

The Division of Conservation is part of the Harpers Ferry Interpretive Design Center, where park exhibit design and production, conservation and media needs are coordinated. The Center has the facilities and expertise to implement a range of interpretive projects for national parks.

## **Staff and Facilities**

The Division of Conservation, with a staff of 17, is directed by Martin Burke, an objects conservator. The facilities are located in Charles Town, West Virginia, 5 miles west of Harpers Ferry. Eight specialized laboratories are equipped to study and identify materials by means of optical microscopy, microchemical analysis, and Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy. A technical library supplements the large historical research library at Harpers Ferry Center.

## **Archaeology Laboratory**

Most of the artifacts treated in this lab are metal. Along with Civil War buttons and buckles, more unusual items treated have included Spanish coins from a 16th-century shipwreck off Padre Island, and 2,000-year-old copper artifacts from the Hopewell culture at Mound City. Some organic materials, but few ceramics, are treated.

**Dan Riss**, staff conservator since 1974. B.A., anthropology, California State University. Areas of special interest: computer systems, indoor air quality.

## Objects Laboratory

This laboratory treats decorative arts and historic objects including glass, ceramics, stone, metal and ivory as well as composites including gilded pieces. The lab has treated rare firearms, porcelains which belonged to Robert E. Lee and Bartholdi's original plaster model of the Statue of Liberty.

**Greg Byrne**, staff conservator since 1977. Attended Indiana University. Areas of special interest: inorganic materials, ceramics and glass.

## Ethnographic Materials Laboratory

More than 28,000 Native American ethnographic objects are located in park collections. Among the items treated in this lab have been personal effects from historic personages, such as the ceremonial shirt of Chief Red Cloud.

**Toby Raphael**, staff conservator since 1977. B.A., anthropology, art history, University of California; M.S., anthropological conservation, George Washington University. Areas of special interest: organic materials, leather and skin products, exhibits conservation.

## Furniture and Wooden Artifacts Laboratory

Wooden artifacts as varied as a high-styled Chippendale secretary or a 55-foot-tall totem pole treated in situ in Alaska reflect the range of objects conserved here. Furniture from the homes of numerous prominent Americans, including Presidents Lincoln, Garfield, Roosevelt and Truman, are among the objects treated.

**Alan Levitan**, staff conservator since 1986. B.A., anthropology; M.A., museum studies, George Washington University. Area of special interest: furnished historic structures.

## Paper Laboratory

The millions of paper artifacts in the National Park Service collections include artwork, manuscripts, maps, photographs, and books. Many of these remain in the context of their original historic home or building.

**Nancy Purinton**, staff conservator since 1994. B.F.A., Tufts University; M.S., University of Delaware Art Conservation Program, Winterthur. Areas of special interest: paper art media and treatment.

## Textile Laboratory

Diversity characterizes the textiles treated by this lab. Noteworthy pieces have included a signed and dated 1858 silk patchwork quilt, the banner carried along Pennsylvania Avenue at the head of a group of 5,000 women demanding suffrage and important embroidered samplers.

**Jane Merritt**, staff conservator since 1992. B.A., SUNY, Oneonta, art history; M.S., University of Maryland, textiles. Areas of special interest: textile materials and technology.

## Science Laboratory

The Division is developing its science capability with a laboratory equipped to perform detailed analyses of objects. Such methods include optical microscopy and microchemical testing, colorimetry, thin-layer chromatography, Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy, metallography and paint cross-section analysis. The technical information gained from these analyses will support interpretive programs in the parks.

**Judy Bischoff**, staff conservation scientist since 1998. B.A., Wheaton College, MA, chemistry; M.S., University of Kansas, inorganic chemistry; Ph.D., University of Connecticut, organic chemistry. Areas of special interest: technical studies and new analytical methods.

## Internship and Training Opportunities

The Division of Conservation offers 3 types of training opportunities: third and fourth year graduate internships and summer work projects. Laboratory supervisors, who make the decision to accept students, seek to match the needs of the students with those of the laboratory and its work load.

### Third and Fourth Year Conservation Graduate Internships

Students are assigned to a specific laboratory and participate in the ongoing work of the Division, including the exhibit process, artifact treatments, systematic surveys and lab administration.

The Division follows general internship guidelines of the graduate programs. Initial inquiries are made by the graduate advisor. Students should submit a letter of interest accompanied by a curriculum vitae in the Fall of the year preceding the internship. Personal interviews are scheduled and completed by February 15, with notification of selection by March 15.

### Summer Work Projects

Eight-week summer work projects are available for second year conservation interns. These projects can include collection re-housing and survey work at a park or artifact treatment under the close supervision of the conservator. Laboratory supervisors develop projects designed to meet the specific needs and interests of the student.

## Applications

Interested persons can apply by letter expressing area of interest accompanied by a curriculum vitae. Make requests for additional information regarding these conservation training opportunities to: Martin Burke, Chief, Division of Conservation, Harpers Ferry Center, P.O. Box 50, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425- 0050. Telephone (304) 535-6228

## Region

The historic Harpers Ferry region of West Virginia is located approximately 65 miles northwest of Washington, D.C. Commuter trains run regularly from several towns in the area to downtown Washington. Charles Town, where the Division is located, is a growing community, centrally located for services and shopping. The area offers a reasonable cost of living and affordable housing.